

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Shaina Wilkinson LMSW with Infinity Home Health

The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

Human Services Public Hearing

February 7, 2023

SB 946 AN ACT CONCERNING TO THE CONNECTICUT HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY

Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrist and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, My name is Shaina Wilkinson, LMSW with Infinity Home Health, I have been a Medical social worker in home care for 8 years, and worked in health care for over 25 years.

I have worked with Infinity home health for just under 2 years where my role has included working with patients on Medicaid and various waiver programs. In all of these programs I have found the need for social work role but have not always been able to visit the patient in their home due to lack of Medicaid coverage for a social work visit.

In my practice as a social worker, I still attempt to assist our patients, their families and caregivers by providing resources, education, guidance and support via a phone call or through the nursing staff. This is not optimal as phone calls and remote support do not fully incorporate the patient's real life social determinants of health that a keenly trained social worker would identify during home visits.

In my years in home care, I have found that social work is helpful to the clinicians/nursing staff going into the home as well. As social workers, we serve many roles to the staff we work along side and to the persons with Medicaid; advocacy being our number one role, especially during recent years facing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many persons with Medicaid were in isolation due to the many restrictions and precautions put in place during the pandemic. This created an even greater need for social work to provide advocacy and support in the home. Also with the pandemic, there is a notable increase in the need for mental health support visits for persons and their caregivers.

I am in support of this bill, but I urge the committee to consider the need for an inclusive Medicaid rate for Social Work services provided through a Home Health Agency for both waiver and non-waiver Medicaid population.

Thank you for your time in reading this testimony and for the consideration of this most important bill before you.

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